THE FACTS: SOCIAL NETWORKING BASICS

Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, Pinterest, LinkedIn and other social networks have become an integral part of online lives. They're a great way to stay connected with others, but you should be cautious about how much personal information you post.

What are some basic strategies for safe social networking?

-- Privacy and security settings exist for a reason: Learn about and use the privacy and security settings on social networks. They are there to help you control who sees what you post and manage your online experience in a positive way.
-- Once posted, always posted: Protect your reputation. What you post online stays online. Think twice before posting things you wouldn't want your parents or future employers to see. One Microsoft study found that 70 percent of job recruiters rejected candidates based on information they found online.
-- On the other hand…Microsoft also found that job recruiters respond to a strong, positive personal brand online. So show your smarts, thoughtfulness, and mastery of the environment.
-- Keep personal info personal: Be cautious about how much personal information you provide on social networking sites. The more you post, the easier it may be for a hacker or criminal to use that information to steal your identity, access your data, or commit crimes such as stalking.
-- Know and manage your friends: Some of the fun of social networks is creating a pool of friends from many aspects of your life. But that doesn't mean all friends are created equal. Use a site or group's tools to manage the information you share.
-- Be honest if you're uncomfortable: If someone posts something about you that makes you uncomfortable or you think is inappropriate, let them know. Likewise, be open-minded if a friend tells you something you've posted about him makes him uncomfortable.
-- Know what action to take: If someone is harassing or threatening you, remove them from your friends list, block them, and report them to the site administrator.

SOURCE: National Cyber Security Alliance Cyber Threat Resources booklet, November 2012